

FBI COMMENTS ON ANTI-COMMUNISM...rev. March 2019

My Research Homepage: <https://sites.google.com/site/ernie124102/home>

More info: ernie1241@aol.com

This webpage will be periodically updated to include statements made by FBI officials and other internal security sources who expressed concerns about ill-informed and misinformed opponents of communism whose extremism was counterproductive to our internal security.

Abbreviations used below:

CACC = Christian Anti-Communism Crusade

CPUSA = Communist Party, USA

HQ = FBI headquarters file number

NYC = New York City FBI field office file number

Newsweek 6/9/47, "How To Fight Communism" by J. Edgar Hoover

"Our best defense in the United States against the menace of Communism is our own American way of life. The American Communists cannot hope to reach their objective of destroying our form of government unless they first undermine and corrupt it, causing confusion and disrupting public confidence in the workings of democracy." ...

"The technique of the label is a Communist trick which anti-Communists are sometimes prone to use. It is deceptive and detrimental, however, to pin the label of 'Communist' on honest American liberals and progressives merely because of a difference of opinion. Honesty and common decency demand that the clear-cut line of demarcation that exists between liberals and Communists be recognized. Despite the Communist technique of labeling themselves as progressives, there is no more effective or determined foe of Communism than the millions of honest liberals and progressives."

7/26/50 Statement on Internal Security by J. Edgar Hoover which contains 7 suggestions, including the following:

#4 = "Do not circulate rumors about subversive activities, or draw conclusions from information you furnish the FBI. The data you possess might be incomplete or only partially accurate. By drawing conclusions based on insufficient evidence, grave injustices might result to innocent persons."

#5 = "Once you have reported your information to the FBI do not endeavor to make private investigations. This can best be done by trained investigators who have access to data acquired over the years on individuals engaged in subversive activities. Hysteria, witch-hunts and vigilantes weaken internal security. Investigations involving internal security require care and painstaking effort. We all can contribute to our internal security by protecting the innocent as well as by identifying the enemies within our midst, In cases involving espionage it is more important to identify spies, their contacts, sources of information, and methods of communication than to make immediate arrests." [HQ 94-1-17998, #1001]

J. Edgar Hoover speech, 12/7/61, *The Faith To Be Free*

12/7/61 Criss Award speech by Hoover which produced objections by John Birch Society members because of Hoover's reference to extreme right:

the definition of the word "*thwart*"

* verb: *prevent from succeeding in or accomplishing something*

the definition of the word "*chauvinism*"

* noun: *exaggerated or aggressive patriotism; excessive or prejudiced support for one's own cause, group, or sex*

Hoover, Page 5:

"The extent of the menace posed by the philosophy of communism is clear-cut and obvious. However, it is absolutely necessary that we attack and oppose it calmly, rationally, and objectively." ...

"The Communist Party in this country has attempted to infiltrate and subvert every segment of our society. The Party's efforts have been thwarted in this country by the Government's internal security programs, by investigation, arrest and prosecution of Party functionaries, and by widespread intelligent public opposition to the communist philosophy."

Hoover, Page 7:

"Let us be for America all the way; but, at the same time, let us not be taken in by those who promote hysteria by the distortion and misrepresentation of the true facts whether they be the proponents of chauvinism of the extreme right or pseudo liberalism of the extreme left."

4/5/61 = The FBI received a phone inquiry from the Justice Department concerning what information it had concerning Robert Welch and the John Birch Society. J. Edgar Hoover responded with a memo addressed to the Attorney General:

"We are answering inquiries from the press and public for information concerning the Society by stating that this Bureau is an investigative agency of the Federal Government and, as such, does not make evaluations or draw conclusions as to the character or integrity of any organization, publication, or individual. However, in the introduction to the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* dated April 1, 1961, I specifically pointed out the need for an objective and dispassionate approach in fighting the communist menace. I felt this step was necessary because of the rash of vigilante-type individuals and organizations springing up throughout the country which tend to depart from fact and use gossip, hearsay, and unsubstantiated charges in fighting communism. In the long run, such tactics hinder rather than help in this fight." [FBI HQ file 62-104401, #990; 4/5/61 memo from Hoover to The Attorney General, captioned "*The John Birch Society*"]

04/19/61 FBI Chief Inspector William C. Sullivan speech at Eastern Washington College of Education – Cheney WA, to Associated Men Students: "***Communism: Challenge To Our Democracy***"

pg 2-3: "Communism attempts to exploit what it describes as the 'built-in' problems of our modern, complex, industrial society, claiming at the same time that these problems can be resolved only under communism. Communism feeds on social ferment. As is evident, the CPUSA, on both a national and local level, is continually exploiting social, economic, and political grievances for its own tactical and strategic purposes. For this reason, the position taken by the Party frequently coincides with many noncommunist views on particular issues."

Pg 3: "We must be careful, then, not to indiscriminately label as communists those whose opinions on a particular question may, on occasion, parallel the official Party position. We must also guard against the tendency to characterize as communists those who merely disagree with us or who advocate unorthodox or unpopular beliefs. Whenever anyone is erroneously branded a communist, the cause of democracy suffers. First, such an accusation constitutes an injustice to the individual, and when justice is denied to any one of the residents of this country, it is denied to all of them. Secondly, false rumors help the communist cause by diffusing the strength of the anti-communist forces. Just as this is no time for inaction, so too it is no time for wild and irresponsible action. The responsibilities of citizens are to be certain of their facts and to report these facts to the proper authorities. It is then up to the authorities to see that the accusations are acted upon in accordance with the law."

Pg. 4: "Our approach to the internal security program—an objective search for the truth; carefully and patiently developing all the evidence; and handling each subject on an individual basis—safeguards our rights. The blunderbuss method—shooty wildly, hoping that in the broadside the guilty will be hit, unmindful of the number of innocent injured—is wrong. It is the very antithesis of democratic law enforcement."

HQ 94-50868-226, 11/3/61 J. Edgar Hoover reply to Texas resident [CACC file]

"...I definitely feel that every citizen has a moral and patriotic duty to furnish all information in his possession to duly authorized law enforcement agencies so that appropriate steps can be taken. On the other hand, citizens should not take vigilante action nor make unfounded accusations against any group, organization, or individual. I would like to point out that by Presidential Directive of September 6, 1939, the FBI was designated as the civilian intelligence agency primarily responsible for protecting the Nation's internal security."

11/22/61 memo from Courtney A. Evans to Alan Belmont captioned "*Communist Doctrine, Tactics, Strategy and Objectives*".

The memo pertains to a suggestion by Attorney General (AG) Robert Kennedy concerning "**providing some type of indoctrination**" for high school and college students regarding communism. Initially, the Bureau replied by summarizing what the Bureau had already done to educate the public about communism (see Hoover memo to AG below) and Kennedy expressed interest in the idea mentioned by the Bureau of preparing some sort of textbook and perhaps a film of some sort which would include contributions by the Defense and State Departments. [Hoover handwrote on this section: "**That would make it impossible.**"]

The Bureau brought Kennedy's attention to the controversy over the film pertaining to HUAC (*Operation Abolition*) and Kennedy responded by suggesting as an immediate substitute "**a public lecture on communism should be given in the Department of Justice building**" perhaps two or three times a week. Hoover handwrote: "**I am absolutely opposed to any such huckster approach.**"

At the conclusion of this 3-page memo, Belmont stated that “*a detailed analysis*” of the Kennedy suggestions should be made and he should be advised about everything the Bureau was already doing (see below for resulting memo). He also suggested that “*we should examine the current exhibit on communism in our tour route here in the building to see whether we can further emphasize the message it carries to the public*” and then bring Kennedy’s attention to that.

Hoover handwritten: “*I share Belmont’s views. A great effort is now being made and successfully without a lot of ballyhoo. We certainly don’t want to get embroiled in brainwashing by the ‘right’.*” [HQ 62-106364, #97 [Anti-Communist Activities FBI file]

FBI Domestic Intelligence Division memo regarding their concern about JBS and CPUSA

By memo dated October 2, 1961, J. Edgar Hoover told Attorney General Robert Kennedy about a 9/27/61 briefing on communism given at FBI headquarters to the American Bar Association Committee on Communist Tactics, Strategy and Objectives.

The Attorney General praised this activity and he then asked J. Edgar Hoover to consider a proposal for expanding such instruction to include FBI seminars on communism at FBI field offices for high school students and college freshmen “*to create a nucleus of informed students to help offset and combat the Communist drive for young members and to start the development of responsible and informed community leaders.*”

The idea was to set up such seminars along the lines of what the Bureau did at the FBI National Academy for law enforcement officers from around the country. The Bureau’s Domestic Intelligence Division subsequently analyzed this proposal in a 10/28/61 memo. The memo contains a paragraph entitled “*Arguments in Favor*” – copied below. Notice the reference to the JBS.

“*Unquestionably there are apparent arguments in favor of such a procedure, including the reaching of a large segment of the American public during their formative years and thus thwarting to a great extent current recruiting drives among youths by the Communist Party USA, and combating the growth of extreme rightists as exemplified by the John Birch Society.*” [HQ 62-106364, #72, 10/28/61 memo from Mr. Sullivan to Mr. Belmont, page 1; my emphasis in red font]

11/27/61 memo from Hoover to Attorney General Robert Kennedy captioned “*Education of American People Concerning Dangers of Communism*”. In this memo, Hoover summarizes what FBI has done to educate the American public:

“*During peak periods in excess of 4000 people tour FBI HQ – 60% of whom are high school and college students and teachers and the Bureau distributed over 1,000,000 pieces of literature to these individuals during their tours.*”

In the “*past 18 months*” (i.e. circa May 1960 thru November 1961) the Bureau responded to “*a very large volume of letters every day from individuals requesting information about communism...We carefully answer each communication...In this connection you may be interested in knowing that in the past 18 months we distributed over 6,000,000 copies of literature concerning communism. This material includes articles and speeches as well as an instructive poster telling the citizen how he can fight communism. For your information, this poster, entitled ‘What You Can Do To Fight Communism’ has proved extremely popular. Last year we circulated over 1,000,000 copies.*” Hoover then mentions that the Bureau distributed 400,000 copies of “*The Communist Menace*” which pertained to “*the conflict between communism and religion.*”

“*In addition, my book, Masters of Deceit, has been very widely distributed. To date, over 1,500,000 copies of the paperback edition have been disseminated as well as roughly 250,000 copies of the hardback edition. The book is now in virtually every school library of the country and is also being used as a textbook in many school systems...I might add that Masters of Deceit was widely serialized in many of the nation’s newspapers, has been featured on radio and television programs and has been widely quoted by writers and commentators. The book has also been translated into a number of foreign languages, including Spanish.*”

Hoover mentioned that the American Legion and American Bar Association also encouraged its circulation and organized study groups and seminars based upon it. He also says the Bureau is currently working on a feature movie based upon the book.

"In addition, I recently prepared two tapes on communism which are today being widely circulated. One is designed especially for young people, the other for adults."

"We are paying very close attention to this most vital subject and I will keep you advised of any additional developments in this regard. I personally believe that our efforts in this regard are not only widely educating the public as to the dangers of communism, but, of equal importance, are counseling a calm, rational, and realistic approach to the danger, rather than one of extremism." [HQ 62-106364, #97 = Anti-Communist Activities FBI file]

2/7/61 memo from FBI Chief Inspector W.C. Sullivan to A.H. Belmont discusses Sullivan phone conversation with Rear Admiral William C. Mott (Judge Advocate General of the Navy).

Mott told Sullivan that Navy speakers on communism "have been making incorrect, exaggerated and unwise statements around the country. As a result of this, the Navy is being severely criticized" – and Mott wanted to discuss the matter with Sullivan.

Sullivan's observations for internal distribution to senior FBI officials:

"Quite clearly, this is handwriting on the wall for the FBI...In view of the above, it would seem to me that this is the time to very, very carefully consider the Bureau's speaking program on the subject of communism. We should be extra careful about the type of invitation we accept. Certainly every Bureau speaker on the subject of communism should lean over backwards to be absolutely factual and to issue only those statements which can be proven to be true. I understand that in my absence from the city the Director has written on a memorandum that there must not be any exaggerated statements on the subject of communism...Additionally, I believe the Bureau should lean over backwards in order to not become identified with any program on which appears these rabid, ill-informed anticommunist speakers like Dr. Fred Schwarz and others. I have long been declining invitations where these men appear on programs. Further, it would seem to me we should be extremely careful not to become identified with any of the fanatical right-wing anticommunists and their utterly absurd viewpoints."

HOOVER handwrote: "Sullivan is absolutely correct." (underlining by Hoover on original.)

TOLSON handwrote: "I certainly agree with Sullivan." [HQ 62-33413, #4310 = Office of Naval Intelligence Liaison FBI file]

California Senate Fact-Finding Subcommittee on Un-American Activities, 1961 Report, page 201:

"There is no question in the mind of this Committee that it is necessary to arouse the people to the dangers of Communism, and that any sound and adequate program in this direction is to be encouraged. But however sincere their motives, if the techniques used in accomplishing this objective tends to smear innocent people and cast suspicion on every individual who has ever been affiliated with the Communist front organization, despite overwhelming evidence that the individual is completely loyal, this actually serves to spread confusion and bewilderment and to destroy the confidence of many people in the accuracy and objectivity of official agencies operating in this extremely challenging and controversial field."

3/8/61 J. Edgar reply to incoming correspondence:

"Full knowledge of this evil conspiracy's true nature is vital if we are to effectively resist its influence. A lack of understanding is dangerous in that it is often responsible for the reprehensive and indiscriminate labeling as communists those who merely dissent or advocate unpopular or unorthodox views."

[HQ 94-50868, #108 = CACC file]

J. Edgar Hoover article in *American Bar Association Journal*, February 1962, page 120

"Our fight against communism must be a sane, rational understanding of the facts. Emotional outbursts, extravagant name-calling, gross exaggerations hinder our efforts. We must remember that many noncommunists may legitimately on their own oppose the same laws or take positions on issues of the day which are also held by the communists. Their opinions—though temporarily coinciding with the Party line—do not make them communists. Not at all. We must be very careful with our facts and not brand as a communist any individual whose opinion may be different from our own. Freedom of dissent is a great heritage of America which we must treasure."

"Today, far too many self-styled experts on communism are plying the highways of America giving erroneous and distorted information. This causes hysteria, false alarms, misplaced apprehension by many of our citizens. We need

enlightenment about communism—but this information must be factual, accurate and not tailored to echo personal idiosyncrasies..."

J. Edgar testimony before Committee on the Judiciary. Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws, 1961

"Unfortunately, there are those who make the very mistake the Communists are so careful to avoid. These individuals concentrate on the negative rather than on the positive. They are merely against communism without being for any positive measures to eliminate the social, political, and economic frictions which the Communists are so adroit at exploiting. These persons would do well to recall a recent lesson from history. Both Hitler and Mussolini were against communism. However, it was by what they stood for, not against, that history has judged them."

J. Edgar Hoover in 4/61 *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*.

Hoover wrote that Communists exploit rifts within our country, then he warned:

"Unfortunately, this involves certain people across the country who engage in reckless charges against one another. The label of communist is too often indiscriminately attached to those whose views differ from the majority...This is neither the time for inaction nor vigilante action...The ingredients for communist coups in nations which have fallen under its spell always include a populace shaken with fear, hysteria and confusion. There is above all the danger of irresponsible counteraction by citizens who lend impetus to communism thru inept attempts to fight this insidious menace."

Memo from FBI Chief Inspector William Sullivan to Assistant Director Alan Belmont concerns Sullivan's appearance and speech at Seventh Annual National Military, Industrial and Educational Conference in Chicago. Memo also refers to a column in *Chicago Daily News* by Norman Ross who also was host of TV program in Chicago which Sullivan appeared on. Ross's column was based upon Sullivan's speech during which Sullivan discussed seven reasons for why communists in the U.S. currently had high morale.

Sullivan commented that his appearances in Chicago and Ross's column came "at a time when extremists of the both the left and the right are embroiled in controversies, when wild charges are being made about the nature of communist activities, when groups such as the John Birch Society and the like have received much attention. Ross' article can and should do the Bureau much good...Contrasted with the wild, irrational statements of fanatics, the seven reasons representing the Bureau's position on communism present the Bureau as one of the few remaining calm, rational voices on the national scene today." [HQ 67-205182, no serial serial, 4/12/61]

2/20/61 speech by William C. Sullivan entitled, *Communism In Theory and Practice*, pg 3 – quoting J. Edgar Hoover:

"Knowing what communism really is and how it operates will...help us to avoid the danger of confusing communism with legitimate dissent on controversial issues...We must not, therefore, indiscriminately label as communists those whose opinions on a particular question any, on occasion, parallel the official Party position. We must also guard against the tendency to characterize as communists those who merely disagree with us or who advocate unorthodox or unpopular beliefs." [HQ 94-54070, #6 = FBI Assistant Director W.C. Sullivan personnel file]

J. Edgar Hoover: "*Communism and the Knowledge To Combat It*" published in *The Retired Officer Magazine*, January-February 1962:

"We must never underestimate the communist menace, yet in the course of combating this deadly enemy utmost care is imperative. We can harm ourselves and our Nation by yielding to the panicky fear which results in hysteria, witch hunts and vigilante activities. We can do grave injustice to the innocent by repeating idle rumor and malicious gossip. Indiscriminate inquiries and private investigators similarly can be harmful to the innocent. In addition, such actions very well may jeopardize the vital work of responsible security agencies. The person who secures information relative to espionage, sabotage, or subversive activities should report it immediately to the FBI without attempting to take individual action."

2/27/62 J. Edgar Hoover reply to JBS member:

"I firmly believe that it is vital that each of us make a determined effort to gain a broad knowledge of the objectives and operations of the communist conspiracy so that we may effectively resist its influence. This will help to avoid the danger of confusing communism with legitimate dissent. To erroneously brand an individual as a communist is to do a grave injustice. It is imperative that we remain calm, rational, and thoroughly accurate in what we say and do in opposing this subversive philosophy. This is no time for rumors, unfounded suspicion, gossip, or the hurling of false accusations." [HQ 62-104401, #1657 = John Birch Society file]

6/27/62 = J. Edgar Hoover letter to conservative columnist George Sokolsky commended his 6/26/62 column in the *Washington Post* entitled "*The Right Right*" as "precise, straightforward thinking". Hoover wrote: "Today, there are too many self-styled experts on communism without valid credentials and without any access whatsoever to classified factual data regarding the inner workings of this conspiracy who have engaged in rumormongering and hurling false and wholly unsubstantiated allegations against people whose views differ from their own. Conscientious newspapermen are greatly reducing the danger that these people create, and my associates and I want to express our thanks for the cooperation you have rendered in this regard." [HQ 62-89885, #219; 6/27/62 Hoover to Sokolsky]

New York Mirror editorial, 8/9/62, p21, quoting 7/15/62 statement by Hoover:

"Nothing will take the place of responsible knowledge in our fight against communism – a knowledge anchored in faith in God. We can defeat Communism because we have the superior values, the superior way of life. The task will not be easy. But we can win if each of us is willing to do his share. We must meet communism with facts, not hysteria. Never must we be guilty of witch hunts or vigilantism. Truth is our best weapon of attack." [NYC 105-14466, #35 = Fund For The Republic file]

1966 J. Edgar testimony before Congressional committee:

"...extremist organizations parade under the guise of patriotism, anti-communism and concern for the destiny of the country...While pretending to formulate their own particular theories for improving our Government in solving complicated social, political and economic problems, the extremists merely offer emotionally charged solutions to the gullible and unthinking person who craves for the simple answer. They call for improved government, yet continually defame those in high office."